

REMARKS

A new independent apparatus claim 36 has been added. Claims 24 – 31 have been amended. Claim 23 has been canceled. Claims 24 – 36 are currently pending in the present application.

In the Office Action, claims 23-26, 28, and 31-34 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Henry et al US Patent No. 6,473,998. Also, in the Office Action, claims 29 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Henry et al US Patent No. 6,473,998 in view of Shibuya JP8-049161. Furthermore, in the Office Action, claims 27 and 35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Henry et al US Patent No. 6,473,998 in view of Bronander US Patent No. 1,773,167.

It is respectfully submitted that claims 24 - 36 patentably define over the prior art of record and are allowable. New independent apparatus claim 36 of the present invention recites an arrangement for removing moisture from items of clothing that includes an absorbent body, means forming a contact path along which the absorbent body and a first item of clothing are in contact with one another during a moisture transfer run, and means for disengaging a respective absorbent body and the first item of clothing from contact with one another at the contact path exit. According to new independent claim 36, the respective absorbent body absorbs moisture from the first item of clothing as the respective absorbent body and the first item of clothing are in contact with one another along the contact path extent such that the level of moisture retained by the respective absorbent body is greater at the contact path exit than at the contact path entry. As further recited in new independent apparatus claim 36 of the present invention, the arrangement includes means for reducing the level of moisture retained by a respective absorbent body to dispose the respective absorbent body at a level of moisture at the contact path entry that is lower than the level of moisture retained by the respective absorbent body at the contact path exit. Additionally, as recited in new independent apparatus

claim 36 of the present invention, the arrangement includes means for advancing each respective absorbent body and the first item of clothing along the contact path such that the first instance at which each respective absorbent body is in moisture absorbing contact with the first item of clothing occurs at the contact path entry, the respective absorbent body and the first item of clothing are advanced along the contact path to permit the respective absorbent body to absorb moisture from the first item of clothing, thereby leading to an increase in the level of moisture retained by the respective absorbent body as the respective absorbent body and the first item of clothing reach the contact path exit, and the respective absorbent body and the first item of clothing are advanced out of moisture transferring contact with one another at the contact path exit, the means for advancing being operable to dispose each respective absorbent body at the contact path entry for a subsequent advancing movement of the absorbent body in contact with a second item of clothing during a subsequent moisture transfer run along the contact path, the means for advancing and the means forming a contact path being configured such that the level of moisture retained by each respective absorbent body increases in correspondence with the advancement of the respective absorbent body and the respective item of clothing along the contact path extent, the means for advancing and the means forming a contact path operating in coordination with one another such that the plurality of absorbent bodies are successively advanced one after another into contact with a respective item of clothing along the contact path extent, whereupon, during each moisture transfer run, one of the absorbent bodies will eventually be advanced out of moisture transferring contact with the respective item of clothing at the contact path exit at a time that another one of the absorbent bodies following behind the one absorbent body has not yet completed its advancing movement in contact with the respective item of clothing.

It is submitted that the arrangement recited in independent apparatus claim 36 of the present invention is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record. For example, Henry (U.S. Pat. 6,473,998) discloses a pre-drying process carried out by means of a device 1 essentially constituted by a conveyor 4 for supporting the

layer of filaments 3, with a permeable conveying surface, by mechanical squeeze-drying means 5 acting on the layer 3 of filaments that passes by on the support conveyor 4, by means 6 for applying a pressure difference by circulation of air through said layer 3, and by a chamber 7 for recovery of the expelled moisture, comprising at its upper portion the support conveyor 4. The support conveyor 4 for the layer of filaments 3 is preferably constituted by a cloth permeable to air and water, driven by a separate motor (not shown) in synchronism with the upstream and downstream conveyors of the pre-drying device. The permeable cloth forming the conveyor 4 can, for example, be constituted by a reinforced strip of natural or synthetic rubber perforated over all its surface, or else by a strip made of a mesh of textile or metallic filaments, or by a perforated metal strip. The mechanical squeeze-drying means 5 is preferably constituted by a permeable cloth guided on guide cylinders 5' and extending above the support conveyor 4 for the layer of filaments 3, the width of this cloth being greater than that of the permeable cloth forming said support conveyor 4. Preferably, the guide cylinders 5' for the cloth forming the mechanical squeeze-drying means 5 are mounted on a chassis fixed above the chamber 7 for recovery of expelled moisture as illustrated in FIG. 2. The securement of this chassis for mounting the guide cylinders 5' of the mechanical squeeze-drying means 5 on the chamber 7 for recovery of expelled moisture is preferably adjustable, such that the spacing between the support conveyor 4 and the mechanical squeeze-drying means 5 is adjustable. Thus, it is possible to carry out a more or less forceful application of the mechanical squeeze-drying means 5 onto the layer of filaments 3 passing by on the support conveyor 4.

However, Henry (U.S. Pat. 6,473,998) does not teach or disclose a "means for advancing" or a "means forming a contact path" such that, as recited in new independent apparatus claim 36 of the present invention, "the means for advancing and the means forming a contact path [is] configured such that the level of moisture retained by each respective absorbent body increases in correspondence with the advancement of the respective absorbent body and the respective item of clothing along the contact path extent." Instead, in the Henry (U.S. Pat. 6,473,998)

arrangement, the mechanical squeeze-drying means 5 is preferably constituted by a permeable cloth guided on guide cylinders 5' and the hot air chamber 7 continuously extracts moisture from this permeable cloth as it is advanced in contact with the layer of filaments 3, whereupon it can be seen that the "level of moisture retained by" the permeable cloth of the mechanical squeeze-drying means 5 of the Henry (U.S. Pat. 6,473,998) arrangement does not increase "in correspondence with the advancement of the respective absorbent body and the respective item of clothing along the contact path extent."

With regard to the other cited prior art, none of Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167), Shibuya (JP8-49161), Nelson (U.S. Pat. 5,404,848), or Eriksson (U.S. Pat. 2,817,227), teach or disclose the arrangement recited in new independent apparatus claim 36 of the present invention. For example, Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167) discloses an apparatus for supplying treating liquid to a material as the material travels over a roll 20, whereupon it can be seen that Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167) teaches away from the present invention which, in contrast to supplying liquid to a material as disclosed in Bronander (U.S. Pat. 1,773,167), removes moisture via an absorbent body.

For these and other reasons, it is respectfully submitted that new independent apparatus claim 36 of the present invention is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record and is allowable. Claims 24 – 30 ultimately depend from claim 36 and are allowable for the same reasons and also because they recite additional patentable subject matter. Moreover, it is respectfully submitted that independent method claim 31 of the present invention is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art of record and is allowable, as well as claims 32 - 35 ultimately depending therefrom.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, entry of the present Amendment and allowance of claims 24 – 36 is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions regarding this amendment, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned. If an extension of time for this paper is required, petition for extension is herewith made.

Respectfully submitted



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